

Film Theory: Ideology and Hollywood

TuTh 9-11
100 AMS

Chuck Kleinhans
chuckkle@nwu.edu
316 AMS Th 3-5
1-2255

Film Theory: Ideology and Hollywood

Permission of instructor required. The course examines the concept of ideology as it has been used in the analysis of popular cinema. Today's students often know the concept from secondary and tertiary sources and are unaware of the original development of the term in Marxist thought and then in cultural analysis. In film theory c. 1970 the concept of ideology was a powerful analytical tool which found subsequent use and adaptation in feminist, queer, race, post-colonial and other recent forms of cultural analysis.

The course will begin with a general introduction to the concept of ideology and popular film. A close reading of select primary sources will follow: Marx, Mao, Gramsci, Althusser, etc. Two analytic commentaries on ideology and cultural analysis will be read; Terry Eagleton and John Thompson. The developing analysis will be complicated with Richard Dyer's *White*. Then the course will consider classic case studies while students do additional readings of case studies while formulating a final paper. While students do their research and writing, the class as a group will do an active analysis of *CASABLANCA* and make ongoing reference to contemporary films/television.

Students can work on popular films of any period, national cinema, genre, or on popular commercial forms of theatre/drama (e.g. *Cats*, *Les Mis*) or performance (*Blue Man Group*, *Riverdance*, etc.) or related phenomenon. Throughout we will seek a multi-level, multi-phased analysis than can account for ideology in terms of class, gender, race/ethnicity, nationality, etc. in popular commercial forms.

Books, readings:

This course continues ideas developed in the first half of the course. Students can take the second part without the first half. It is assumed you have or can find on your own these texts from part one:

Hill, J. and P. C. Gibson, eds. (1998). *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies*. New York, Oxford University Press.

Braudy, L. and M. Cohen, Eds. (1999; 5th edition). *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*. NY, Oxford UP.

Francesco Casetti, *Theories of Cinema: 1945-1995*. Austin: U Texas Press. 1999.

The books for this course are available at Norris Center bookstore. Bring the readings for discussion.

Dyer, Richard. *White*. London: Routledge, 1997.

Eagleton, Terry. *Ideology: An Introduction*. London: Verso, 1991.

Thompson, John B. *Ideology and Modern Culture; Critical Social Theory in the Era of Mass Communications*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1990.

Additional readings will be available as in class handouts.

Course schedule

Tu 27 March

lecture: intro and overview

case study: LADY BE GOOD, montage sequence

Th 29 Mar

Read:

Kleinhans, 'Marxism and Film,' The Oxford Guide to Film Studies, ed. John Hill and Pamela Church-Gibson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 106-113. [quick read for overview]

entries on Ideology in Bottomore, Eagleton (handouts) [close reading for discussion]

Kleinhans with D. Scott Brewer, "The Montage Sequence in LADY BE GOOD," Jump Cut no. 31 (spring 1986), pp. 24-27.
AND Kleinhans, "Ideological Implications of the Montage Sequence," Jump Cut no. 31 (spring 1986), p 27 (handouts)
[close reading for discussion]

Jane Gaines, 'LADY BE GOOD: Do Dogs Dance?' Jump Cut no. 31 (Spring 1986), pp. 19-23 [quick read for background]

[read to generate two questions for further discussion--post on BB by 6 pm Wed 28 Mar.]

Tu 3 April

Read: Eckert, 'Shirley Temple and the House of Rockefeller' [read to generate two questions on BB by Monday night, April 1, 5 pm.]

Marx, selections (handout)

Lefebvre, The Sociology of Marx, ch. 3

inclass presentation: Eckert [team: Douglas, Wang]

Th 5 April

Read:

Marx, selections (handout)

Comolli/Narboni, 'Cinema/Ideology/Criticism' in Braudy & Cohen (aka Mast & Cohen)

Cahiers du cin'ma, 'Young Mr. Lincoln' in Braudy & Cohen

inclass presentation: Cahiers, YML [team: Malitsky, Lewis, Paraskiv]

Tu 10 April

Read:

Lenin, Mao, selections (handout)

Dyer, White, ch. one

individually assigned image research (everyone)

inclass presentation: Negative Images/Positive Images [Menon/ Mann/Salazar Parker]

***collected readings

Th 12 April

Read

Gramsci, selections 1 and commentary

Kleinhans, 'Working-Class Film Heroes: Junior Johnson, Evel Knievel and the Film Audience,' (handout)

Kleinhans, "Notes on Melodrama and the Family under Capitalism," (handout)

inclass presentation: working class heroes [Kim, Brown]

Tu 17 April

Read:

Gramsci, selections 2

MacCabe, 'Realism and the Cinema,'

review: Classic Hollywood Cinema (handout)

inclass presentation:

1. Gentlemen Prefer Blondes [Douglas, Menon]

2. Stella Dallas [Malitsky, Mann]

Th 19 April

Read

Althusser, ISA

Eagleton

Dyer ch 2

Lesage, Broken Blossoms

inclass presentation

Broken Blossoms [Wang, Lewis]

Tu 24 April

Read

Althusser

Baudry

Eagleton, Thompson

inclass presentation: CASABLANCA one [Kim, Paraskiv]

Th 26 April

Read:

Demming, Running Away from Myself (selection)

inclass presentation: CASABLANCA two [Salazar Parker, Brown]

Tu 1 May May Day, the International Worker's Day!

Read

Eagleton, Thompson, Dyer

Eckert, MARKED WOMAN

Hess, GODFATHER II

inclass presentation: genre, the gangster [Malitsky]

Th 3 May

final paper pitch due (meet with Chuck during the next week)

Read:

Eagleton, Thompson, Dyer

Kleinhans, 'Class In Action,' The Hidden Foundation: Cinema and the Question of Class, ed. David James and Rick Berg, (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 1996) 240-263.

inclass presentation: genre--the Western [Douglas], the Hollywood Musical [Menon],

Tu 8 May

reports on journals:

Screen (UK), Cineaste, Jump Cut, Cinema Journal (after 1980), Cine-Tracts (Can), CineAction (Can), Frameworks (UK), Film Quarterly, Quarterly Review of Film and Video, Velvet Light Trap, Spectator (USC), Women and Film, Camera Obscura, ...

Th 10 May

inclass presentation: (suggestions)

genre/figure--noir, femme fatale and neo-noir (e.g., The Last Seduction)

genre/figure--masculinity in crisis (e.g., Fight Club)

Tu 15 May

inclass presentation: (suggestions)

social problem film (Traffic, Days of Wine and Roses, etc.)

social satire/critique--(American Beauty, Sweet Smell of Success)

miscegenation--(Jungle Fever, Strange Days)

queer theory--(PeeWee's Playhouse,

postcolonial theory--

Th 17 May

problem cases: TBA

Tu 22 May

Kleinhans--summary

Th 25 May

No Class -- write your papers

Tu 29 May

Paper presentations/critiques

Th 31 May

course evaluations (inclass)

Paper presentations/critiques

Friday 8 June, noon: final deadline for final draft of your papers. Due in Chuck's mailbox, and by email.